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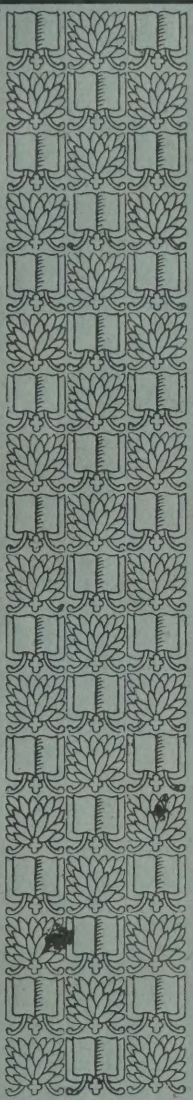
Liberia Conference Blue Book



The Situation in Africa.

Authorized by the Annual Conference and Issued by the Cabinet.

MONROVIA, LIBERIA:
COLLEGE OF WEST AFRICA PRESS
JANUARY, 1916

J. A. Simpson offered the following resolution on the 4th day of the Annual Conference session, which was adopted:

"*Resolved*, That the Cabinet be requested to issue an appeal on behalf of the conference to the Board of Foreign Missions for an increase of the appropriation, and to the church generally for Special gifts."

Liberia Conference Blue Book

Brief Historical Resume

The birth of Methodism on the West Coast of Africa was a fortunate occurrence for this benighted land. The record of the church here has been the same as in other parts of the world: her preachers are zealous and self-sacrificing and the people flock to her standard gladly, and as they grow to understand the purpose of the work, they come in increasing numbers. Feeling that there are many friends of our cause in other parts of the world who would be all the more interested and willing to assist us if they knew what has been accomplished and what we need, we have decided to issue what we shall term "THE LIBERIA CONFERENCE BLUE BOOK" in which we desire to set forth the present conditions in this field.

The work which was the beginning of what is now the Liberia Annual Conference came into view in 1833 when Melville B. Cox, the first foreign missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church, reached the shores of darkest Africa. In refering to our work, in order that the reader may have an intelligent understanding of the two classes of people among whom we labor we shall speak of the aboriginal stock, the heathen element which the church seeks to uplift and save, as "Natives", and those representing the people who came from America and are to-day the ruling class, as "Liberian". It is estimated that Liberia contains anywhere from 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 natives, and about 25 000 Liberians. It is recorded that this latter element organized a church on the vessel while enroute to Liberia, and of course kept the movement alive until Melville Cox arrived. The reason therefore that

his name is connected with the beginning of the Christian Church in Liberia comes of the fact that he organized the movement officially and started it on its career which has proven so successful. The record shows that the first session of the Conference was held January 10, 1834; Rev. Rufus Spaulding, presiding. The regular session for 1916 was called to meet January 12th, just 82 years and 2 days from the date on which the session of 1834 convened.

The first Bishop to visit Liberia was Bishop Levi Scott, who presided over the session which convened March 7th, 1853. His visit evidently greatly impressed the Church at home for it was not many years before the movement was formulated that culminated in the election and consecration of Bishop Francis Burns who was set apart for this field and presided for the first time officially at the session convening January 25th, 1859 He administered for four years and passed to his reward. In February, 1867, Bishop J. W. Roberts, having been previously consecrated, took his place as the Bishop in charge of this work. After eight years of service in this capacity he also died. Bishop Gilbert Haven came to the session December 18th, 1876. Bishop William Taylor spent twelve years in charge of the Conference and Bishop Joseph C. Hartzell eight. In recent years, Bishops William Burt and L B Wilson, have presided jointly with the present Bishop, one session each.

It is evident that the Church showed very great interest in this field in its early history, for quite a number of missionaries came at different times during the earlier years, and some were men and women of prominence and power. Possibly the reason foreign missionaries ceased to come to the extent they did a little later was because the appropriation of the Missionary Society was reduced. As we understand it the support of the work during Bishop Taylor's administration was accomplished very largely through *Special*

Gifts, the Society's appropriation being only $2,500 per annum. When one considers how limited the collections for the support of the preachers were, he is bound to conclude that the members of the Conference of those days deserve a great deal of credit for continuing to preach the gospel and for keeping the work alive. Those who read this will please understand that though there are only 51 members and probationers of the Annual Conference, there are more than 120 workers on the field including foreign missionaries, teachers and supplies. Some of these are Liberians and others are civilized Natives.

There are a number of other missions in Liberia some of which are under regularly organized boards and others are independent, but it is an interesting fact to note that all these movements are supported by money collected in the United States.

Some Things Accomplished

In considering the work of the Conference we shall begin with the session at which the present Bishop's administration was inaugurated, February 15th, 1905. Perhaps the best way to enable those interested to understand most clearly the progress of the work is to give figures indicating its standing at given periods in each quadrennium, say in 1905, 1909 and 1915, the last session held up to this writing.

	1905	1909	1915
Total Membership	3,301	5,391	10,959
Sunday School Scholars	2,447	3,607	5,628
Day School Scholars	1,084	1,240	2,224
Value of Church and Parsonage Property	$95,200	$138,550	$204,057
Conference Collections	$203	$467	$1,579
Ministerial Support	$2,510	$3,166	$5,087

At the session of the Conference for 1905 the Bisop announced a forward movement under the heads of

evangelism, temperance and self-help, and something has been accomplished under each head. For it was not long after this that the brethren of the Conference began repairing and remodeling their old churches, and eventually building new ones. The people soon began to take pride in this class of work and made a splendid showing. In the case of some of them the Bishop assisted by importing windows, ceiling, corrugauated iron for new roofs, etc., and thus encouraged, even some of the smaller churches made improvements. The material ordered was paid for by moneys collected as undesignated Special Gifts. As we look over the reports before us we find that 30 new buildings have been erected during this period and are estimated at $37,820, and 13 remodeled or extensively repaired at the cost of $39,650. Among the latter Mount Scott Church raised for improvrments $15,000, the Clay-Ashland Church $1,000, and according to the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, First Church, Monrovia raised more than $20,000. These three churches are among the Liberians. In this connection the following lists are self-explanatory:

Detailed List of New Buildings Erected With Estimated Value of Each

Bassa District:		
Bexley Church	$ 700	
Farmington Church	500	
Fortsville Church	800	
Hartford Church	1,000	
Lower Buchanan Church	1,200	
Paynesbury Church	600	$4,800
Cape Palmas District:		
Garraway (2 Churches)	$ 750	
Grand Cess	1,100	
Sasstown Church	1,000	
Tuskegee Chapel	750	
Wissika Church	420	$4,020

Monrovia District:

Claratown	$ 500	
Gardnersville Church	500	
Johnsonville Church	600	
Krootown, Monrovia, *	1,500	
New Georgia Church	1,600	
Tallah Church, Cape Mount	500	$5,200

Sinoe District:

Greenville Church	$ 6,000	
Nana Kroo Mission	1,000	
Sanpropo, "Scott Memorial"	500	
Sanquin, "Mulford M. E. Church"	500	
Sinoe River Industrial Mission, House and Church,	1,000	$9,000

St. Paul River District:

Fendal Church	$ 500	
Robertsville Church	500	
Sasstown Church	300	
Upper and Lower Brewerville	6,000	
Upper Caldwell Church	7,500	$14,800
GRAND TOTAL		$37,820

Detailed List of Buildings Repaired and Estimated Cost of Repairs

Bassa District:

Central Buchanan Church	$ 200	
Upper Buchanan Church	400	$600

Cape Palmas District:

Mount Scott Church	$15,000	$15,000

* This refers to our first Krootown Church which was undermined by the sea. The second is now in course of erection and with which the Board is assisting us; but the people and the Bishop have raised more by far than the Board. It is of cement blocks. This brings the total number of churches erected up to thirty-one. The new building is estimated at $3,000. Which will make a grand Total of $40,520.

Monrovia District:

First Church Cape Mount	$ 800	
First Church Monrovia	20,000	
Leonard Mission	600	$21,400

St. Paul River District:

Bensonville Church	$ 300	
Careysburg Church	225	
Clay-Ashland Church	1,000	
Crozierville Church	500	
Harrisburg Church	125	
Lower Caldwell Church	200	
Virginia Church	300	$2,650
GRAND TOTAL		$39,650

There have been purchased with money secured through Special Gifts what is known as the Leonard Mission, a splendid two-story brick building at the very gateway to the Bassa tribe; El Bethel, an independent mission on which the organizers claimed to have spent $10,000, and the Stokes Theological and Training School, just across the street from our College building in Monrovia, all at an aggregate cost of $10,300.

Present Indebtedness

We are confident that it will be gratifying to the friends of our cause to know that although our property has increased from $95,200 in 1905 to $204,057 as reported in 1915 our total indebtedness on it could be paid with $1,300, and then have a small margin left. That is to say, the minutes show $271 indebtedness for the entire Conference and in addition the Resident Bishop owes about $200 for a church lot purchased for a native church; and for building material, etc., imported from Europe from time to time, he owes a balance of about $800. The total valuation of property quoted does not include the building of the Col-

lege of West Africa, nor of the Cape Palmas Seminary or Stokes Training School.

In addition to the property purchased we have received the following donations: Mrs. Caroline R. Moore of Monrovia left the Mission by will 150 acres of land planted in Coffee; Dr. Ernest Lyon, now of Baltimore, Md., who was for seven years the American Minister Resident and Consul General to Liberia, gave us a farm of 52 acres across the river from Monrovia, and the Rev. J. J. Powell, one of our preachers who is a native of the Bassa tribe, gave us thirty acres at Powellsville and agrees to assist in the erection of a building for mission purposes. The deeds for these properties are filed with the Board in New York.

The Revival Movement

One feature of our work in this field that should not be overlooked is the great revival movement among the natives, with which God has blessed us. But for this our membership could not have made the advancement it has. And yet, we could not gather into the church all who professed conversion, because we had not a sufficient number of missionaries to instruct and train them. Many however went into other churches, and hence were not lost to christianity. Literally, thousands, largely young people, have been swept into the Kingdom of God, and were thus called upon to forsake their heathenism and superstitious practices for the sake of the Gospel. It is remarkable to what extent they do give up their old customs and habits, and many live such consistent christian lives as to put some who were born and reared in christian homes to shame. On receiving them into the church we question them as to their religious experience, their use of strong drink, and their

relation to polygamy because we teach them that such things are not to be practiced by christians. One can also see the influence of christianity in their towns, where the Sabbath is better observed than in many a civilized town and in some cases they enact laws forbidding even the heathen people to go to their farms on Sunday and insisting that all attend church.

Is it not better by far to have these people attending the Christian Church, observing the Sabbath, contributing to the uplift of their community and the spread of the gospel, rather than to continue in the ways of heathenism? We are sure it is.

It is in this connection that a native worker is most helpful to the missionary; the fact is we doubt very seriously whether the missionaries could carry on the work with any degree of success but for this class of assistants. Some of them not only exhort and assist in directing the people but teach both the day and Sunday school, for we are glad to say that the vast majority of those we use have some education. Nevertheless, occasionally we get hold of an unlettered man like Wesley Fish, converted under the influence of Miss Agnes McAllister, who is a power for good notwithstanding his limitations in this particular. Since we are compelled to employ so many native workers we are not surprised when we find an occasional failure. In this field fifty or sixty dollars support a native worker for one year; but we need in addition a general evangelist to conduct revivals where workers may desire such assistance.

For a number of years our success in reaching the natives was limited to Maryland and Sinoe Counties, Rev. W. G. Alston and Rev. J. A. Kennedy, District Superintendents, respectively, but within the last two years under the leadership of Rev. J. A. Simpson, District Superintendent, the movement has reached

the county of Bassa, and as a result several churches have been organized in that section. This newest work in common with that in the other counties named, is sadly in need of both men and equipment. While there has not been a great movement along this line in Montserrado County, Revs. R. V. Richards and G. W. Parker, District Superintendents, what has been accomplished there among the natives has been very effective. Adjoining Monrovia is a large native community known as Krootown in which our work has been remarkably successful. Here we organized formally nine years ago beginning both a church and school right in the town. A building was given for such work by Mr. D. W. Washington of Memphis, Tennessee as a memorial to his former wife—Dr. Georgia L. Patton—who had labored here as an independent missionary. Through the Sunday School of First Church Monrovia, the building was secured for our work. During the intervening years the membership of the church increased to over 600 and the enrollment of the school to more than 300. The native element who occupy the town represents the sea-faring people of this section, and hence repeated revivals in such a distributing center has been the means of sending the gospel for many miles back into the interior, and along the sea-coast as well. Unfortunately the building given by Mr. Washington was undermined by the sea and was taken down, in the effort to save the material. This forced us to close our school, and has greatly retarded the work of our church. It had already become evident that the building was too small, and hence an effort was soon begun to erect a better and a larger one. The people hadn't a great deal of money but they raised some and felt they would like to undertake the erection of a building of cement blocks. Assisted by the Board, the Bishop and other friends, the new church with a basement for

the school is now in course of erection and we hope to occupy it, though it will not be completed at that time, in the early part of this year.

Some of Our Needs

The Broad of Foreign Missions has been so seriously embarrassed since the present Bishop has been in charge of the Liberian field, that an appropriation for property to this and other fields was made for only three years. Since then the money secured for such purpose consists for the most part of Special Gifts contributed by individuals here and there who are interested in the work. This being true, it is not to be wondered at that the erection of mission buildings and churches has not kept pace with the demands for the same. For while we would not ask the Board, even though it was prepared to make the appropriation, for the total amount necessary to erect a church, for us to be able to contribute a small amount of cash always proves a stimulus and a help to the people. Having only a limited amount of Special Gifts for such purpose, there are many places without buildings that would have been otherwise provided, for some cash is always necessary in order to import the corrugated iron to enclose and roof our native churches In this connection we are presenting a list of 24 places, which is only a partial one, that are to-day without needed buildings. In most cases the native building of poles, mud and a thatch roof has done service as a house of worship, but these do not last long, and in order to perpetuate our work more substantial edfices are absolutely necessary. The list is as follows:

Bassa District:

Bi Trojah Mission	$ 600	
Johnstown Circuit	500	
Little Bassa	700	
New Sottroh	600	
River Cess	800	3,200

Cape Palmas District:

Barraka	600	
Battoo "	500	
Cavalla	500	
Garraway (2 Churches)	1,000	
Grand Cess (2 Churches)	1,200	
Picaniny Cess (2 Churches)	1,200	
Po River (2 Churches)	1,000	
Sasstown "	1,000	
Watcheka	800	
Wissika Circuit (2 Churches)	1,500	$9,300

Monrovia District:

Burah	$ 500	
Leonard Mission	1,000	
Powellville "	500	$1,750

Sinoe District:

Blue Barrow "	$ 250	
Dewh "	1,200	
Nana Kroo (2 Churches)	1,200	
Niffoo "	600	
Wajah	500	$4,000

St. Paul River District:

Road Center "	$ 700	$700

RECAPITULATION

Bassa District	$3,200
Cape Palmas District	9,300
Monrovia District	1,750
Sinoe District	4,000
St. Paul River District	700
TOTALS FOR DISTRICTS:	$18,950
College of West Africa	$ 50,000
Cape Palmas Seminary	25,000
St. Paul River Industrial School	10,000
Bassa Academy	8,000
GRAND TOTAL	$111,950

The St. Paul River Industrial School as it stands has nea rly a thousand acres of land and three or four good buildings, but is not in operation for want of proper equipment and funds to make necessary improvements.

It may be well to say that the class of church buildings necessary cost on an average about $500 plus the labor etc., that we may secure from the native christians. Recently we have erected in this way the Mulford Chapel at Sanquin, Scott Memorial at Sanpropo and two others at Sasstown and Grand Cess; the two last named being quite large cost a good deal more. However, generally the amount indicated makes possible a neat little church and a few things in the wayof equipment such as a bell, some school books and Sunday school supplies. As a rule, every church is a school house.

Our principal educational institution is the College of West Africa, Monrovia, which has been strengthened recently by a building for the Stokes' Theological and Training School. At present, however, the latter is not in full operation for want of equipment and an instructor to devote his time to the work. We have also the Cape Palmas Seminary at Cape Palmas. Both of these institutions are usually crowded beyond their capacity.

In addition, we have a system of primary schools that are feeders to the schools of higher grade mentioned. The total enrollment for our schools was, before the European War began, 2,363. Of these 1,857 were children of Native Africans. Since the beginning of the War the enrollment has been somewhat reduced. Most, if not all of our schools are in need of additional equipment.

But, for the support of these schools a most urgent need is scholarships. We need twenty-five scholarships for our Theological School at $25 each; one hundred and fifty scholarships for our Primary Schools at

$15 each. All contributions should be sent to the Treasurer of the Board of Foreign Missions, New York City, clearly stating that the money is for the Liberia Conference, etc.

We are sure it will not be out of place to say that the plan on which we conduct our native missions is not only the least expensive but the most effective. That is to say, we have a central station, where the missionary or missionaries reside and work; attached to this are anywhere from one to ten sub stations under the immediate care of native workers. When the missionary has the time to give proper supervision these small stations prove a great blessing to the people in the dark interior regions. We were enabled to begin the work after this manner through the benevolence of Rev. Mr. Stevens of California, who, some years ago, made a contribution by means of which we organized seven such stations.

But finally, while we feel there is no doubt that what has been said as to the needs of our field will impress the most casual reader that an increase in the Board's appropriation is absolutely necessary we nevertheless think some special statement of the case should be made, hence the following:

First, The appropriation has been increased only $2,500 during the past twelve years. And this in face of the fact that our membership has advanced during this period from 3,301 to 10,959, and thirty or more teachers and preachers have been added to the number of our workers.

Second, Just in proportion as our lay membership has grown, some increase in our financial support has been found absolutely necessary as the number of workers had to be increased also. This could only be done by withdrawing at least a part of the support hitherto allowed some other point; in this way we have

been forced to weaken parts of the work in order to strengthen others. The result is that our field is properly provided for at very few points. But for a slight increase in special gifts, mostly designated, the appeals of the awakened heathen and the zeal of our workers would have gone for nought to a greater extent than is the case at present. There should be some way provided to enable us to take proper care of our new work without crippling that already established.

THIRD, Though the membership of the churches among the Liberians has made limited but steady advancement, the largest increase has been among the Native element of our population, and this has made it necessary to add to the number of workers and therefore to increase the proportion of the appropriation going to the support of this work.

FOURTH, The time was when it was complained that many of our workers were receiving missionary money and at the same time were also holding some government position, but we are glad to record that at the present time there are only five so engaged, though we have more than one hundred and twenty workers, and we are sure that the number who accept government service will be still further reduced in proportion as the ministerial support is increased. This is all the more evident since we are receiving into the ministry in recent years a class of men who are giving themselves entirely to their work, and hence must depend upon the church for support for their families and themselves.

FIFTH, We have been repeatedly told in the past that the Church at home asks for results and that Liberia is considered a hard and unresponsive field. The facts and figures published herein are taken directly from our Annual Conference Minutes, and show that we are now able to present to the Church what she has been demanding. Our work is certainly advancing.

We serve a people the vast majority of whom are poorand yet they are trying to help themselves. They are slowly but surely increasing their contributions for the support of the ministry and the benevolent causes, and have raised during the past twelve years nearly eighty thousand dollars for the improvement of their church property. We feel that what has been accomplished should merit the attention of the Church and that an increased appropriation should be granted our field. For we realize that unless this is done, our past success will become more and more our embarrassment, since the very limited appropriation must be divided among so many more. As it stands to-day it is altogether inadequate for the work even as it is, not to mention new work that it would be criminal to neglect. An increase of $7,500 would send us forward with a rush, hence we appeal to the Board and the friends of Africa everywhere to come to the assistance of this most needy field. The church will never have a better opportunity to reach the heathen of this portion of Africa for many are tired of heathenism; also, at the same time they are being redeemed from paganism they will be saved from mohammodanism as well. For the Natives of this section are being forced to choose between Christ and Mahomet; thousands seem ready to accept the Saviour and we trust the Church will enable us to do our part to lead them into the Master's kingdom.

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth laborers into His harvest."